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ART. XIV.—*Notes on the Thags,*¹ by **LIEUTENANT REYNOLDS**, of the Madras Infantry, and of **H. H. the Nizam's Service**. Communicated by **LIEUTENANT COLONEL SMYTHE**, of the Madras Cavalry.

Read December 3rd, 1836.

INTRODUCTION, BY **LIEUT. COL. SMYTHE**.

THE Paper on the Thags was drawn up in 1832, from the personal observations of Lieutenant Reynolds, who had been for a considerable time (nearly two years I believe) employed by the Resident at Hyderabad, as a sort of Agent among that extraordinary people. His principal and public object was to gain information as to the extent and scenes of their depredations, by admitting and taking down the testimony of such among them as were willing to become approvers; so that ultimate steps might be taken to put down the systematic practice of such horrid atrocity. In this he succeeded so well, that whilst I was at Hyderabad in 1833, a body of, I think, nearly three hundred of them were brought in as prisoners, were tried by the Resident, under a special commission for that purpose, and were punished by hard labour on the roads, to which, I believe, the awarded sentence of death was commuted.

Lieutenant Reynolds, from his continued sojourn among them, his peculiar position, and the confidence with which he inspired those who claimed his protection, had probably a better opportunity of becoming acquainted with a set of people, whose works were all darkness, and to whom secrecy was essential, than any European ever had: hence we have more minute details than ever appeared publicly before; and he was able to verify, by personal observation, the truth of many circumstances which otherwise were too shocking for belief.

During the trial of the wretches at Hyderabad, some singular things occurred, all tending to confirm his statement of their being exceedingly superstitious, and of their having no adequate idea of the horrible wickedness of their pursuit.

A woman was called on to testify against a man (he was her son), the ordinary oath was administered, and she unhesitatingly denied all knowledge of circumstances, in which it was well known that the prisoner had been engaged under her very eye. The oath was changed to one held so sacred by her, that she dared not persist

¹ Commonly called Th'lags, or T'hugs.

in her falsehood. A curious exhibition of the existence of conscience (or a feeling resembling it) in one, who, if not a professed murdereress herself, had been during life the associate of professed murderers. And what can be more curious, what can more forcibly show how singularly the mind may be led astray, than the fact, that these wholesale murderers, whose every act showed so utter a recklessness of human life, should have so great a horror of shedding blood? What a nice distinction between the spiller of blood, and the taker of life? Yet, while they glory in the dexterity with which they perform the latter, they reject the former title with abhorrence; and while they confess themselves to be murderers solely for gain, they think it foul scorn to be called thieves!

THE T'hags form a perfectly distinct class of persons, who subsist almost entirely upon the produce of the murders they are in the habit of committing. They appear to have derived their denomination from the practice usually adopted by them, of decoying the persons they fix upon to destroy, to join their company; when they take advantage of the confidence they endeavour to inspire, by strangling their unsuspecting victims. They are also known by the name P'hansigars: but in the north-eastern part of the Nizam's dominions, are usually called T'hags. There are several peculiarities in the habits of the T'hags, in their mode of causing death, and in the precautions they adopt for the prevention of discovery, that distinguish them from every other class of delinquents; and it may be considered a general rule whereby to judge of them, that they affect to disdain the practice of petty theft, house-breaking, and indeed every species of stealing that has not been preceded by the perpetration of murder.

The T'hags adopt no other method of killing but strangulation; and the implement made use of for this purpose, is a handkerchief, or any other convenient strip of cloth. The manner in which the deed is done will be described hereafter. They never attempt to rob a traveller until they have in the first instance deprived him of life; after the commission of a murder, they invariably bury the body immediately, if time and opportunity serve, or otherwise conceal it, and never abandon a corpse on the highway, unless they happen to be disturbed.

To trace the origin of this practice would now be a matter of some difficulty, for if the assertions of the T'hags themselves are

entitled to any credit, it has been in use from time immemorial and they pretend that its institution is coëval with the creation of the world ; like most other inhuman practices, the traditions regarding it are mixed up with tales of Hindú superstitions, and the Thags would wish to make it appear that in immolating the numberless victims that yearly fall by their hands, they are only obeying the injunctions of the deity of their worship, to whom they say they are offering an acceptable sacrifice.

The object of their worship is the goddess *Kali*, or *Bhavani*, and there is a temple at a village, near Mirzapúr, to which the Thags usually send considerable offerings, and the establishments of priests at that shrine are entirely of their own community. *Bhavani*, it seems, once formed the determination of extirpating the whole human race ; she sacrificed all but her own disciples, but she discovered, to her astonishment, that through the intervention of the creating power, whenever human blood was shed, a fresh subject immediately started into existence, to supply the vacancy. She therefore formed an image, into which she instilled the principle of life, and calling together her disciples, instructed them in the art of depriving that being of life, by strangling it with a handkerchief.

The method was found on trial to be effectual, and the goddess directed her worshippers to adopt it, and to murder without distinction all who should fall into their hands, promising that she would herself dispose of the bodies of their victims, whose property she bestowed on her followers ; and also that she would be present at, and preside over, and protect them on those occasions, so that none should be able to prevail against them.

Thus, say the Thags, was our order established, and we originally took no care of the bodies of those who fell by our hands, but abandoned them wherever they were strangled, until one man more curious than the rest, ventured to watch the body he had murdered, in expectation of seeing the manner in which it was disposed of. The goddess of his worship descended as usual to carry away the corpse, but observing that this man was on the watch, she relinquished her purpose ; and calling to him angrily, rebuked him for his temerity, telling him she could no longer perform her promise regarding the bodies of the murdered, which his associates must hereafter dispose of the best way they could.

Hence, say they, arose the practice invariably followed by the Thags, of burying the dead ; and to this circumstance principally is to be attributed the extraordinary manner in which these atrocities have remained unknown ; for with such circumspection and secrecy

do they proceed to work, and such order and regularity is there in all their operations, that it is next to impossible a murder should ever be discovered.

Absurd as the foregoing relation may appear, it has had this effect on the minds of the T'hags, that they do not seem to be visited with any of those feelings of remorse, or compunction, at the inhuman deeds in which they have participated, that are commonly supposed to be, at some period of their lives, the portion of all who have trafficked in human blood ; on the contrary, they dwell with satisfaction on the recollection of their various and successful exploits, and refer, with no small degree of pride and exultation, to the instances in which they have been personally engaged, especially if the number of their victims has been great, or the plunder they have acquired has been extensive.

Notwithstanding the adherence to Hindú rites of worship observed among the T'hags, a very considerable number of them are Musulmans ; no judgment of the birth or caste of a T'hag can, however, be formed from his name, for it not unfrequently happens that a Hindú T'hag has a Musulman name, with a Hindú alias attached to it ; and *vice versa* with respect to T'hags who are by birth Muhammedans. In almost every instance, the T'hags have more than one appellation by which they are known. Of the number of Musulman T'hags, some are to be found of every sect, Shaikh, Syed, Mogul, and Pattan, and among the Hindús, the castes chiefly to be met with, are Bráhmans, Rajpúts, Sodhís, Alírs, and Kolís. In a gang of T'hags, some of every one of these castes may be found,—all connected together by the same peculiar plan of murder practised by them ; all subject to the same regulations, and all, both Hindús and Musulmans joining in the worship of Bhaváni. They usually move in large parties, often amounting to 100 or 200 persons, and resort to all manner of subterfuges for the purpose of concealing their real profession. If they are travelling southward, they represent themselves to be either proceeding in quest of service, or on their way to join the regiments they pretend to belong to in this part of the country ; when, on the contrary, their route is towards the north, they represent themselves to be sepoys from corps of the Bombay or Nizam's army, who are going on leave to Hindústán.

The gangs do not always consist of persons who are T'hags by birth ; it is customary for them to entice by the promise of monthly pay, or by holding out hopes of amassing money, many persons who are ignorant of the deed of death that is to be perpetrated for the attainment of these objects, until made aware of the reality by

seeing the victims of their cupidity fall under the hands of the stranglers; and the T'hags declare that novices have occasionally been so horrified at the sight, as to effect their immediate escape; others, more callous to the commission of crime, are not deterred from the pursuit of wealth by the frightful means adopted to obtain it, and remaining with the gang, too soon begin personally to assist in the perpetration of murder. Many of the most notorious T'hags are the adopted children of others of the same class; they make it a rule when a murder is committed, never to spare the life of any one, either male or female, who is old enough to remember and relate the particulars of the deed. But in the event of their meeting with children of such a tender age as to make it impossible that they should be able to reveal the fact, they generally spare their lives, and, adopting them, bring them up to the trade of T'hagi. These men, of course, eventually become acquainted with the fact of the murder of their fathers and mothers, by the very persons with whom they have dwelt since their childhood, but are still not deterred from following the same dreadful trade.

It might be supposed that a class of persons whose hearts must be effectually hardened against all the better feelings of humanity, would encounter few scruples of conscience in the commission of the horrid deeds whereby they subsist; but, in point of fact, they are as much the slaves of superstition, and as much directed by the observance of omens in the commission of murder, as the most inoffensive of the natives of India are in the ordinary affairs of their lives.

The chief symbol of worship among the T'hags, is a Khodálí, or pick-axe; it is known among them by the names of Nishán Kassí, and Mahí: with every gang there is carried a Nishán, which is in fact their standard, and the bearer of it is entitled to particular privileges. Previous to commencing an expedition, the heads of the party celebrate a Púja to the Nishán,¹ which is typical of the deity of their worship: the ceremonies differ little from the usual rites of Hindús on similar occasions. A Hindú T'hag of good caste is employed in making a quantity of the cakes called Púries, which being consecrated, are distributed among the assembly. The Nishán is bathed and perfumed in the smoke of burning Benjamin, and is afterwards made over to the Nishán Wala, who receives it in a piece of cloth kept for that purpose; it is then taken out into the open fields, in the expectation of an omen being observed. The Nishán is deposited in a convenient spot in the direction the party intends to proceed, and certain persons are deputed to keep watch

¹ Nishán, a sign.—Persian.

over it. There are particular birds and beasts that are looked upon by the Thags as the revealers of omens, to whose calls and movements their attention is on this occasion particularly directed, among the number are the Owl, the Jay, the Jackall, the Ass, &c. If one of these calls out or moves to the right-hand side, the omen is looked upon as favourable, and the project is not abandoned. It is not unusual for the Thags to look for a favourable omen previous to the commission of a murder, and they are frequently deterred from carrying their intentions immediately into effect, by the observance of an unfavourable sign, such as a snake crossing their path when in pursuit of a victim, or the circumstance of any of the animals before mentioned calling out on their left-hand sides. This no doubt accounts for the Thags so often keeping company with travellers for many days previous to murdering them, although they had determined upon their sacrifice from the moment of their first joining the party. The omen is denominated Sagun, by the Thags. A corruption no doubt of the Persian Shagún.

In the event of an expedition proving more than ordinarily successful, a Púja is usually made to Bhavání, and a portion of the spoil taken by the gang is set aside for the purpose of being sent to the pagoda before alluded to, as an offering to the goddess. Propitiatory offerings are also made, and various ceremonies performed before the Khodálí, or Nishán, should the Thags have failed in obtaining any plunder for a length of time. In every gang of Thags, there are to be found one or more Jemidars, who appear to hold that rank not by the choice of their followers, but in consequence of their wealth and influence in their respective villages, and of having assembled their own immediate followers in the vicinity of their homes. The profits of a Jemidar are, of course, greater than those of his followers; he receives $6\frac{1}{2}$ or 7 per cent. on all silver coin and other property, not hereafter specified, and then shares in the remainder in common with the other Thags of the party. When gold is obtained in coin or in mass, the tenth part is taken by the Jemidar, previous to dividing it, and he has a title of all pearls, shawls, gold, embroidered cloth, brass and copper pots, horses, &c. The Jemidar acts as master of the ceremonies when the Púja is performed, and he assigns to every Thag the particular duty he is to undertake in the commission of every murder that is determined on.

These duties are performed in succession by all the Thags of the party, and to the regularity and system that exists among them, is to be attributed the unparalleled success that has attended their proceedings; next to the Jemidar is the Buttoat, or strangler, who

carries the handkerchief with which the T'hags usually murder their victims. This implement is merely a piece of fine strong cotton cloth about a yard long; at one end a knot is made, and the cloth is slightly twisted and kept ready for use, in front of the waistband of the person carrying it. There is no doubt but that all T'hags are expert in the use of the handkerchief, which is called Rumal, or Palu, but, if they are to be believed, only particular persons are called upon or permitted to perform this office. When a large gang is collected, the most able-bodied and alert of their number are fixed upon as Buttoats, and they are made the bearers of the handkerchiefs, only after the performance of various and often expensive ceremonies, and only on their observance of a favourable omen. The old and experienced T'hags are denominated Guru Bhow, and the junior T'hags make a merit of attending upon them, filling their Hukahs; shampooing their bodies; and performing the most menial offices. They gradually become initiated in all the mysteries of the art. And if they prove to be powerful men, these disciples of the Guru are made Buttoats. The T'hags say, that if one of their class was alone, and had never strangled a person, he would not presume to make use of the handkerchief, until he observed a favourable omen. The ceremonies are the same as those described in carrying out the Nishán, in room of which the handkerchief is on this occasion substituted, and an offering of Pán, Cocoa-nut, Turmeric, red ochre, &c., is made. When a murder is to be committed, the Buttoat usually follows the particular person whom he has been nominated by the Jemidar to strangle, and on the preconcerted signal being given, the handkerchief is seized with a knot in the left hand, the right hand being some inches further up, in which manner it is thrown over the head of the person to be strangled, from behind; the two hands are crossed as the victim falls: and such is the certainty with which the act is done, as the T'hags frequently declare, that before the body falls to the ground, the eyes usually start out of the head, and life becomes extinct. Should the person to be strangled prove a powerful man, or the Buttoat inexpert, another T'hag lays hold of the end of the handkerchief. The perfection of the art is described to be when several persons are simultaneously murdered without any of them having time to utter a sound, or to be aware of the fate of their companions. Favourable opportunities are given to the Buttoats to make their first essay in the art of strangulation. When a single traveller is met with, a novice is instructed to make a trial of his skill: the party sets off during the night, and stops while it is still dark, to drink water, or to smoke. While seated for this

purpose, the Jemidar inquires what time of night it may be, and the Thags immediately look out at the stars to ascertain, this being the pre-concerted signal; the Buttoat is immediately on the alert, and the unsuspecting victim, on looking up at the heavens in common with the rest of the party, offers his neck to the handkerchief, and becomes an easy prey to his murderer. The Buttoat receives eight annas extra for every murder that is committed, and if the plunder is great, some article of value is assigned to him over and above his share. The persons intended to be murdered are called by different names, according to their sect, profession, wealth, &c. &c. A victim having much property is entitled Naimud, and they are also generally called Rosy.

To aid the Buttoat in the perpetration of a murder, another Thag is specially appointed, under the denomination of Samsúah; his business is to seize the person to be strangled by the wrists, if he be on foot, and by one of his legs, if he be on horseback, and so to pull him down. A Samsúah is sent off to the traveller, and he places himself in a convenient situation near him, to be ready when required.

In the event of the traveller being mounted on horse-back, a third Thag assists, under the designation of Worawal; his business is to lay hold of the horse's bridle, and check it as soon as the signal for murder is given.

One of the most necessary persons in a gang of Thags, is he who goes by the name of Tillaí. The Thags do not always depend upon chance for obtaining plunder, or roam about in the expectation of meeting travellers, but frequently take up their quarters in or near a town, or some great thoroughfare, from whence they make excursions according to the information obtained by the Tillaís; these men are chosen from among the most smooth-spoken and intelligent of their number, and their chief duty is to gain information; for this purpose they are decked out in the garb of respectable persons, whose appearance they must have the tact of putting on. They parade the bazaars of the town near which their associates are encamped, and endeavour to pick up intelligence of the intended despatch or expected arrival of goods, of which information is forthwith given to the gang, who send out a party to intercept them. Inquiry is also made for any party of travellers who may have arrived, and put up in the bazaars, or elsewhere; every art is brought into practice to scrape an acquaintance with these people; they are given to understand that the Tillaí is travelling the same road, an opportunity is taken to throw out hints

regarding the insecurity of the roads, and the frequency of murders and robberies, an acquaintance with some of the friends or relations of the travellers is feigned, and an invitation given to partake of the repast that has been prepared at the place where the Tillai is put up, the convenience of which, and the superiority of the water, are abundantly praised. The result is, that the travellers are inveigled into joining the party of T'hags, and they are feasted and treated with every politeness and consideration by the very wretches who are also plotting their murder, and calculating the share they shall acquire in the division of their property. What must be the feelings of men, who are actuated by motives so entirely opposed to their pretended civility of behaviour, is difficult to imagine; and I know not whether most to admire the duplicity with which they continue to conceal their murderous intentions, or to detest the infernal apathy with which they can eat of the same dish, and drink out of the very cup that is partaken of by the victims they have fixed on to destroy. It is on the perfection which they have in the art of acting as Tillais, that the T'hags particularly pride themselves, and it is frequently boasted of by them, that it is only once necessary to have an opportunity of conversing with a traveller, to be able to mark him as an easy victim, whenever they choose to murder him.

Instances sometimes occur, when a party of T'hags find their victims too numerous for them to master while they remain in a body, and they are seldom at a loss for expedients to create dissensions, and a consequent division among them.

If all their arts of intrigue and cajolery fail in producing the desired result, an occasion is taken advantage of to ply the travellers with intoxicating liquors, a quarrel is got up, and from words turn to blows, which end in the dispersion of the company, who, proceeding in different roads, fall an easy prey to their remorseless destroyers. Having enticed the travellers into the snare they have laid for them, the next object of the T'hags is to choose a convenient spot whercon to murder them; this, in the technical language among them, is denominated a Bhil, and is usually fixed upon a short distance from a village on the banks of a Nalah, where the trees and underwood afford a shelter from the view of occasional passengers. The T'hag who is sent on this duty is called a Bhilla, and having fixed upon the place, he either returns to the encampment of his party, or meets them in the way, to report the result of the inquiry; if the Bhilla returns to the camp with his report, the Luggais or grave-diggers are sent out with him to prepare a grave for the interment

of the person it is intended to murder ; arrangements are previously made, so that the party in company with the travellers shall not arrive too soon at the Bhíl ; at the particular spot agreed upon the Bhilla meets the party, a recognition takes place, the jemidar calls out " Bhilla, have you cleared out the hole ? " the Bhilla replies " Man-jeh," on which the concerted signal is given that serves as the death-warrant of the unheeding travellers, who are forthwith strangled ; while some are employed in rifling the bodies, others assist in carrying them away to the ready prepared graves ; the Luggaís perform the office of burying them, and the remainder of the gang proceeds on its journey, leaving with them a certain number of the Tillaís or watchmen on the look-out, to prevent their being disturbed ; should a casual passenger appear, the Tillaí gently throws a stone among the Luggaís, or grave-diggers, who immediately desist, and crouch on the ground until the danger is averted.

After the interment is completed, the Luggaís rejoin their party ; but it is not unusual to leave one or more of the Tillaís to keep watch, to prevent the bodies being dug up by beasts of prey, and if a discovery be made by the village-people, to give instant information to their companions, in order that they may have the opportunity of getting out of the way ; it often happens that the arrangements and precautions above mentioned cannot be entered into, that travellers are casually met with on the road, and hastily murdered, and as carefully interred ; in these cases, if the opportunity is afforded them, the T'hags always leave some one to keep watch at the place, and rather than run the risk of detection by the bodies being dug up by wild beasts, they return and re-inter them.

If the ground is strong they never touch the corpse, but if the soil is of that loose texture as to render it probable that the bodies in swelling will burst the graves, they generally transfix them with spears or knives, which effectually prevents that result. When the T'hags may choose to strangle their victims in some more exposed situation, as in a garden near a village where they may have put up for the night, they resort to further precautions to prevent discovery. The grave is on this occasion prepared on the spot after the murder has been committed, and the corpse having been deposited therein, the superfluous soil is carried away in bundles, and strewn in the neighbouring fields ; the place is watered and beaten down with sticks, it is ultimately plastered over with cow-dung, and *chulahs* or fire-places for cooking are made on this spot. If the party find it necessary to decamp, they light fires in the *chulahs*, that they may have the appearance of having been used to cook in ;

should they determine on staying, they use the chulahs to cook their food in on the succeeding day, having no qualms of conscience to prevent their enjoying the victuals prepared on the spot, the associations attendant on which ought to be considered too revolting to dwell upon.

The parties of T'hags being often very large, they have many beasts of burden in their train, as bullocks, ponies, and sometimes even camels; if they remain at a place where they have committed a murder, and do not construct fire-places, they take the precaution of tying their cattle on the spot. The T'hags say they can always recognise the fire-places of their own class, there being peculiar marks about them, which are made to serve as directions to the next party that passes that way. The T'hags always prefer burying their victims at some distance from the public road, and therefore, as soon as the bodies of murdered persons have been stripped of the property found upon them, they are carried on the shoulders of the Luggais to the spot selected for interring them. They say they are more careless about the concealment of a corpse in the Nizam's country than elsewhere, for they have been always so secure from molestation, that they have frequently left bodies exposed without running any risk, for no one takes the trouble of inquiring about the matter.

The division of spoil does not usually take place immediately after the perpetration of a murder, but every person secures a portion of the property on the spot, and when a convenient opportunity occurs, each produces the article he has been the bearer of, and a division is made by the jemidar, whose share is in the first instance deducted; then the Buttoats, the Sumsuahs, and Tillais claim the extra reward for each murder they have assisted, and the Luggai takes the reward for the trouble he had in digging the grave, and the residue is divided share and share alike among the whole gang. It may be supposed that the cupidity of individual T'hags may occasionally induce them to attempt to defraud their comrades, by secreting any articles of value at the time the murdered bodies are plundered; but they say that the whole class are bound by an inviolable oath to produce for appropriation to the common stock, everything that may fall into their hands while engaged with a particular party. The division of plunder, as may be supposed, often leads to the most violent disputes, which it is astonishing do not end in bloodshed; but it might almost be supposed the T'hags have a prejudice against the spilling of blood, for they refuse making use of the weapons they usually wear, even in defence of their own per-

sons. The most wanton prodigality occurs when plunder is divided, and occasionally the most valuable shawls and brocades are torn into small stripes, and distributed among the gang, should any difference of opinion arise as to their appropriation. The Thags say this is also done that every person may run the same risk, for such an article could not be shared among them until converted into money, and some danger is attendant upon the transaction.

They appear invariably to destroy all Hindús that fall into their hands, as well as many other articles that are likely to lead to detection; ready money is what they chiefly look for, and when they have a choice of victims, the possessors of gold and silver would certainly be fixed upon in preference to others. In consequence, it seems to have been a general practice among the Thags to way-lay parties of Sepoys of the Bombay and Nizam's armies, while going on leave to Hindústan, for the sake of the specie they are usually the bearers of; and they remark, that of the many Sepoys who are supposed by their officers to have abandoned the service, while their friends and relations consider them to be still with their regiments, they alone can tell their fate, the whole number being strangled by their hands. The immense wealth that has at various times fallen into the hands of these miscreants has been expended in the grossest extravagance and debauchery, and as may be supposed, their ill-gotten gains remain but a short time in their possession.

The Thags have in use among them not exactly a language of their own, but they have sets of slang terms, and phrases, which give them the means of holding a conversation with persons of their own class without any chance of being understood by the uninitiated. Their term of salutation, whereby also they recognise each other if they casually meet without being personally acquainted, is "*Ali Khan Bhai Salam.*" That which appears most extraordinary is the manner in which the Thags recollect the names of their comrades, as well as their persons, and they declare, that though the name of any one of a gang may have escaped their recollection, they never forget the person of a Thag who has assisted them in the perpetration of murder. The Thags, indeed, seem to know each other almost instinctively, and the quickness with which the recognition between individuals takes place is so surprising, as almost to warrant the supposition that a sort of free-masonry has been established among them.

To facilitate their plan of operation, the Thags have established a regular system of intelligence and communication throughout the countries they have been in the practice of frequenting, and they

become acquainted with astonishing celerity with the proceedings of their comrades in all directions. They omit no opportunity of making inquiries regarding the progress of other gangs, and are equally particular in supplying the requisite information of their own movements; for this purpose they have connected themselves with several persons residing in the Nizam's dominions as potails and cultivators of villages, many of the latter of whom follow the profession of T'hags in conjunction with their agricultural pursuits.

The Marwaris and other petty bankers are also frequently the channels of communication between T'hags, and there is no doubt, the purchasers of the property of the murdered. The religious mendicants throughout the country occasionally assist in this measure, by becoming the receivers of messages from bands of T'hags to be delivered to the next party that comes in their way. With this view also they have adopted the practice of forming chulahs, or fire-places, of a particular construction, to serve as marks of their progress through the country: when a party of T'hags come to a road that branches off in two directions, they adopt the precaution of making a mark for the guidance of those associates who may come after them, in the following manner. The soil in a convenient spot is carefully smoothed, and the print of a foot is distinctly stamped upon it; a T'hag, on seeing this mark, which he naturally searches for, knows, by the direction in which it points, which track has been followed by those that preceded him. The peculiar designation by which they are known, is a point on which the T'hags are particularly tenacious, and they attach an importance and even respectability to their profession, that they say no other class of delinquents is entitled to. The denomination of thief is one that is peculiarly obnoxious to them, and they never refrain from soliciting the erasure of the term, and the substitution of that of T'hag whenever it may appear in a paper regarding them, declaring, that so far from following so disgraceful a practice as theft, they scorn the name, and can prove themselves to be as honest and trustworthy as any one else, when occasion requires it. It seems their ambition to be considered respectable persons, and with this view they expend much of their gains on their personal decorations, even those who have been seized and admitted as evidence are more solicitous about their dress and decent appearance than anything else. They mostly seem to be men of mild and unobtrusive manners, possessing a cheerful disposition entirely opposed to the violent passions, and ferocious demeanour, that are usually associated with the idea of a professed murderer; such is the extent to which this dreadful

system has been carried, that no idea can be formed of the expenditure of human life to which it has given occasion, or the immensity of the wealth that has been acquired by its adoption.

When it is taken into consideration that many of the Thags already seized confess to their having, for the last twenty-five or thirty years, annually made a tour with parties of more than a hundred men, and with no other object than that of murder, and that they boast of having successfully put their tens and twenties to death daily, and that they say an enumeration of all the lives they have personally assisted to destroy, would swell the catalogue to hundreds, and as some declare to thousands, some conception of the horrid reality may be formed. Of the amount of the property that they have yearly made away with, it must be impossible to form any calculation ; for, independent of the thousands in ready money, jewels, and bullion, the load of valuable clothes and every description of merchandise that continually fall into their hands, the *Húndís*, that they invariably destroy, must amount to a considerable sum.

The impunity with which the Thags have heretofore carried on their merciless proceedings, the facility they have possessed of recruiting their numbers, which are restricted to no particular class or sect ; the security they have had of escaping detection, and the ease with which they have usually purchased their release when seized by the officers of the weak native governments, in whose dominions they usually commit the greatest depredations, have altogether so tended to confirm the system, and to disseminate it to the fearful extent to which it has now attained, that the life of no single traveller on any of the roads of the country has been safe, and but a slight chance has been afforded to large parties of escaping the fangs of the blood-thirsty demons who have frequented them.
